JEFF BROWN

:one's, Garrison's fraud

EW FILMS AROUSE such passionate controversy as Oliver Stone's "JFK." The film claims Kennedy's assassination conspiracy by a military-in-alist elite, and that former)rleans District Attorney Jim ›on valiantly strove to expose uth about the killing.

›ne shrugs off all criticism ays that, if nothing else, his ighlights the many troubling ons about the reliability of Varren Commission Report. t is unconscionable for one laims to be a partisan of truth ›rt to the misrepresentations uses in portraying such an tant event. You do not ex- fraud by perpetrating anoth- ıd.

ere is nothing wrong with 's challenging the Warren t. There is also nothing new it. Serious, honest people ›een pointing out its flaws for t three decades. But Stone is to give hero's status to Jim ›on, who conducted one of ost outrageous, unjust prose- ıs in American history.

rrison's "case" began when cal press questioned his use ›lic funds to investigate the assassination. When report- ›nfronted him in February he promised to "solve" the assassination in a few days.

He attempted to arrest David Ferrie, a local gay who dabbled in anti-Castro activities. When Ferrie died shortly after the investigation began, Garrison ordered the arrest of Clay Shaw, a retired businessman, also gay, whom Garrison alleged was Clay Bertrand, supposedly an acquaintance of Oswald's.

A search of Shaw's house turned up whips, chains, hoods and a rope, which Garrison displayed to the press, as if Shaw's lifestyle was in some way relevant.

The "case" dragged on for another two years. Investigators quit in disgust, charging the whole affair was a bogus creation. Witnesses told how the prosecution tried to buy false testimony. One produced a tape of the bribe being offered. Garrison kept promising startling new developments that never materialized.

Garrison relied on witnesses like Perry Russo, a local con artist who, in one of several inconsistent statements, said he had overheard a conversation about the assassination between Ferrie and Shaw at a party.

A former psychiatric patient who related hearing a similar discussion between Ferrie and Shaw at a party, took the entire court on a tour of the French Quarter in a futile attempt to find the place where the party was held.

Another witness was Vernon Bundy, an ex-con and heroin addict, who claimed that, as he was giving himself a fix, he saw Shaw give money to Oswald.

Garrison's case resembled the treason trials against Henry VIII's enemies, in which incredible conspiracies rested on the claims of unbelievable witnesses.

After 55 minutes of deliberation, the jury acquitted Shaw. Garrison ordered Shaw charged with perjury for the testimony he gave in his own defense. He charged a defense witness with perjury and indicted a defense investigator for obstruction of justice for having obtained a copy of a prosecution memorandum. It took a federal judge, who found Garrison's actions in bad faith, to finally halt his reign of terror.

GARRISON HAD every right to investigate and to raise questions about the assassination.

But no prosecutor has a right to charge a person on worthless evidence in order to bring an issue to a public forum. Prosecutions are not sterile exercises in political correctness. They are criminal charges against human beings, horrible ordeals for the people on trial. For his own aggrandizement, Garrison brought a totally unsupportable case that destroyed Clay Shaw.

Jim Garrison's actions should not be heralded. They should be an object lesson in the study of abuse of power.

Brown is public defender of Francisco.